

A New Zealand view of the USA's problems - 2020

by Drew F Rafferty

One of the greatest pleasures in life is to look up a word in the Apple Thesaurus on my Mac. The number and variety of alternatives can be a great insight into the way America thinks. It is an enlightening experience. There are around one hundred alternatives to the word "nincompoop". As a foreigner, from the other side of the world, I feel justified in saying "Your Honour, I rest my case!" Take note that "nincompoop" is only three syllables, and well within the understanding of the current occupants of the White House. But enough of that! We have no better politicians in New Zealand and Australia. I am not picking on the USA - look at Boris Johnson in England. Just imagine Donald and Boris as a duo on the late shows on television. It would be award winning comedy.

Religion is important in America. There is but one serious religion, and it has the greatest number of adherents. It is called the Religion of Greed. Just about everyone prays it will bless them and give them comfort. If you are unsure of where I am heading, take a look at CNBC. You'll soon get the drift. It's not confined to business though, everyone is looking for an angle that benefits themselves. It is in the American DNA. At this stage, I offer the words of Lord Acton, around one hundred and fifty years ago. You have probably heard the first sentence - it is the second that is truly meaningful.

"Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Now, here is the really important sentence that follows. "Great men are almost always bad men". Think about it! It was written in a time when women were very much in the background. I don't wish to be discriminatory and unkind, but I haven't heard any women demanding that in terms of equality, they should be considered bad women when they reach the top of their own tree.

In my infrequent visits to the USA, I have always been mystified with the lack of understanding of world geography. Where are you from - I say, New Zealand - Where's that? - I say, Near Australia. Then I give up! After considerable experience, it is much better to suggest I live "somewhere past Honolulu". That seems to remove the suspicion I am a threat. I guess some people in the Continental USA may positively think New Zealand is part of the Big Island of Hawaii.

Silly as it might seem, how does a person make an objective decision about supporting US Government policies, when they have no idea of where the policies are being applied, who is being supported and for what reason. My standard answer to people, when asked about politicians, is that I have never met them personally, so what do I know? I can't always believe reports in the media, because of the lack of impartiality within the media. It's not quite as bad as that, though. Go back to Lord Acton's second sentence, "Great men are almost always bad men". In general I just write politicians off and stay well clear.

America is the cradle of brainwashing advertising. If you have a good product, an easily affordable price, and the utmost reliability or consumer satisfaction, then why do you have to spend billions on an advertising budget. If you saved all that money, you could produce another desirable product and make a lot more real profit. Sure, the lawyers, accountants, consultants, media producers and publishers would create hell. But the people would have better products for their own standard of living than just be a never ending source of profit for these people. Tough! Once again, we encounter the great Religion of Greed.

Having followed the US media to understand the American political system, my conclusion is that it is based upon the thoughts of the Mad Hatter in Alice in Wonderland. The Founding fathers were no Angels, but they did try, seriously, to set things out in a logical manner, although on their own admission, the concepts had a definite "sell by date". The Constitution is simply the football in the game, something everyone wants to get their hands on and have the advantage over the other side. The fine ideas of the originators can be spoken about in hallowed terms, but the reality is that the coach calls the plays, and deviousness is the order of the day! Unless the USA can introduce a system of referendums to allow the people a say in what THEY want, there is no hope for the political system and things will just get worse. But that is never going to happen. Greed Rules!

Thought! I have this wonderful vision of Ben Franklin, on top of the White House, installing a lightning rod, and wiring it down to the desk in the Oval Office!

Drew F Rafferty is a "nincompoop" type of retired management consultant, living between New Zealand and Australia. He professes a good sense of humour, and consequently monitors US politics in some considerable detail. He champions Ben Franklin and Adam Smith, the Father of Economics.